

The Last Palaiologan Mosaic Program of Hagia Sophia

The Dome and Pendentives

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Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, built and decorated from 532 through 537 during the reign of the emperor Justinian, has suffered severe damage to its building fabric and mosaics from numerous earthquakes over the centuries. A series of earthquakes during 1343 and 1344 resulted in the final collapse of the eastern portion of the dome, eastern pendentives, and eastern arch of the church on 19 May 1346 (figs. 1–3).¹ Restoration and redecoration of these parts of the building were completed soon after 1355, a time of hardship in the Byzantine Empire caused by civil war, poverty, and lack of funds. This fourteenth-century mosaic program, which was at the heart of what proved to be the last Palaiologan restoration campaign, originally depicted the image of Christ in the central medallion of the dome (now lost). The four pendentives supporting the dome received images of four celestial beings sometimes designated *cherubim* or *seraphim*, but more properly called simply *celestial beings*, as explained below.

1 For the date of the collapse of the dome and other parts of the building, see S. Lampros, *Βραχέα χρονικά*, Μνημεῖα τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἱστορίας (Athens, 1932), 1:80; P. Charanis, “Les *Βραχέα χρονικά* comme source historique,” *Byzantion* 13 (1938): 333–62, esp. 345–46. The date is also found in MS Vat. Gr. 773, fol. 1v: R. Devreesse, *Codices Vaticani graeci*, vol. 3 (Vatican City, 1950), 289. See also C. Mango, *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul*, DOS 8 (Washington, DC, 1962), 67. Cyril Mango gathered information on the restoration of the dome, pendentives, eastern semidome, and eastern arch, and established a relative chronology: *ibid.*, 66–68.



FIG. 1 Hagia Sophia, looking east (photo courtesy of Rossitza Schroeder)



FIG. 2 Hagia Sophia, looking toward dome and eastern arch (photo by author)

Only the eastern pair has been preserved (they were cleaned in 2010 and 2011, the results of which activity are still unpublished).² The eastern arch displayed an image of the *hetoimasia* at its center with the Virgin and the emperor John V Palaiologos on the north side, and John Prodromos on the south side. Only Mary and John Prodromos have survived. Various scholars have discussed the mosaics of the eastern arch, identifying their figures and examining the meaning of their program.³ The fourteenth-century imagery of the dome and pendentives, however, deserves more attention. A restoration in the 1990s and the study and publication

of technical aspects of the dome mosaics have made additional information available to supplement the fundamental, five-decades-old work of Cyril Mango.⁴ This essay utilizes newly available data obtained during conservation of the dome in the 1990s in order to further the discussion of the mosaic decoration of the dome and pendentives, their production, style, and meaning, as well as their role in the Palaiologan restoration campaign.

The Restoration of the Dome and Pendentives

My discussion begins with a summary of the contextual evidence on the political climate, the restoration of the damaged areas of Hagia Sophia, and the production of its mosaics.⁵ In the course of repairs of the fabric and

2 The cleaned northeast “seraph” was briefly mentioned by R. Ousterhout, “Images at the Heart of the Empire: The Figural Mosaics of Hagia Sophia,” in *Mosaics of Anatolia*, ed. G. Sözen (Istanbul, 2011), 233–44, esp. 244.

3 Mango, *Materials*, 66–76; N. B. Teteriatnikov, “The Mosaics of the Eastern Arch of Hagia Sophia, Constantinople: Program and Liturgy,” *Gesta* 52, no. 1 (2013): 61–84.

4 Mango, *Materials*, 66–76, 83–92.

5 *Ibid.*, 66–68.



FIG. 3 Hagia Sophia, looking toward dome and eastern arch (photo by author)

mosaics, familial and political circumstances caused the supervisors of Hagia Sophia to change several times. The supervisors included Anna of Savoy (1306–1365) and the emperors John V Palaiologos (r. 1341–1391) and John VI Kantakouzenos (r. 1347–1354). Anna was the second wife of Andronikos III Palaiologos (r. 1328–1341). Before Andronikos's death, he entrusted the affairs of the state to his friend and advisor Kantakouzenos, and after his death, Anna became a regent to their youthful son John V. However, Anna's mistrust and her close court members' jealousy of Kantakouzenos caused their denial of his position in the court, which in turn provoked a six-year civil war between the two parties. On 8 February 1347, Kantakouzenos entered Constantinople with his army and forced his opponents to an agreement according to which he became a senior co-emperor alongside John V. This family lineage and political drama should be kept in mind during the following examination of

the different stages of work on the fabric and mosaics of Hagia Sophia.

The *Βραχέα χρονικά* [Short Chronicles] gives the extent of the 1346 damage to Hagia Sophia and its subsequent reconstruction:

On Friday night, 19 May 6854 [1346], during the reign of Anna Palaiologina and her son, John [V] Palaiologos, when John Aprenos was patriarch, the eastern part of the church of St. Sophia (i.e., the one apse, the third of the dome, etc.) collapsed and destroyed the beautiful ambo, the iconostasis, and all the holy icons. And on Friday 6 October 6855 [1346], the reconstruction of the semidome (μυῦακιν) together with the arch (ἀψίς) was completed.⁶

The historian Nikephoros Gregoras (b. ca. 1290/91 or 1293/94; d. 1358–61) and John VI Kantakouzenos further reported on the damage to the building from the earthquake, and on the subsequent restoration campaign. John VI stated that the eastern arch and the roof above the bema were rebuilt in 1346 under the supervision of the *protostrator* Phakeolatos during the reign of Anna of Savoy.⁷ Gregoras also stated that “the remaining part of the hemisphere of the roof, on either side, above the arch” was rebuilt by John VI in three months toward the end of 1353.⁸ Thus there was a lapse in time between the two stages of the restoration. And John VI mentioned damage to only one-third of the

6 Lampros, *Βραχέα χρονικά*, 1:80n182, 88–89. For translation, see Charanis, “*Βραχέα χρονικά*,” 345–46; Charanis translated ἀψίς as “apse” but it should be translated as “arch.” See also I. Ševčenko, “Notes on Stephen, the Novgorodian Pilgrim to Constantinople in the XIV Century,” *SüdostF* 12 (1953): 165–74; Mango, *Materials*, 67 and n. 182.

7 L. Schopen, ed. *Ioannis Cantacuzeni Eximperatoris Historiarum*, 3 vols. (Bonn, 1828–32), 3.30.1 and 5–6. During the Palaiologan period the *protostrator* had high ceremonial functions. The *protostrator* was a high-ranking court title holder whose main ceremonial functions were to bear the emperor's sword, if the *mezas domestikos* was not available, and provide service for the emperor. He had other services such as commanding the troops in the army. R. Macrides, J. A. Munitiz, and D. Angelov, *Pseudo-Kodinos and the Constantinopolitan Court: Offices and Ceremonies* (Farnham and Burlington, 2013), 72, 83. See also *ODB* 3:1748–49.

8 N. Gregoras, *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina historia*, 3 vols., ed. L. Schopen (Bonn, 1829–55), 3.198–99.

dome.⁹ These medieval records, in conjunction with modern examinations of the Palaiologan repairs by Robert Van Nice and William Emerson, leave no doubt that the eastern portion of the dome and half of the northeast pendentive—as well as the southeast pendentive, the eastern semidome, and the eastern arch—collapsed in 1346, which caused considerable damage to the structure of the building.¹⁰ It is also apparent that restoration of the building fabric started soon after the collapse, and the semidome and the eastern arch were repaired during the reign of Anna in that same year. It is not clear, however, how or why the damaged segment of the dome was left open until the end of 1353, when John VI, as stated, finally repaired it.

As for the repair of the mosaics, John VI stated that he himself “took charge of the decoration of the church, that is, both marbles and disposition of fine mosaic cubes. Whatever was lacking to complete [the work] was later added by the youthful Emperor [John V] Palaiologos when he became sole ruler of the Romans.”¹¹ Gregoras did not mention any mosaics made under the supervision of John VI, but, rather, implied that the huge mosaic image of Christ (now lost) in the crown of the dome was completed later, probably after the resignation of John VI, when John V became sole ruler.¹² The lack of clarity in who was charged with what efforts thus makes it necessary to reevaluate the chronology of structural repairs and mosaic decoration.

The Structural Repairs

The work began initially on the fabric of the eastern arch and semidome under the supervision of Anna. Both Gregoras and John VI mentioned that these repairs were completed on 6 October 1346, that is, about four and half months after the collapse.¹³ In February 1347,

John VI came to power and he took over the supervision of the restoration of Hagia Sophia, but the work on the restoration was not continued until much later in his term. In the words of Gregoras, the repair of “the remaining part of the hemisphere of the roof, on either side, above the arch” took place during three months close to the end of 1353.¹⁴ However, it seems implausible that the large open area of the dome would have remained exposed between 6 October 1346 and late 1353. The Russian pilgrim Stephen, who came to Hagia Sophia from Novgorod in 1348 or (more likely) 1349, did not mention the damage to the building.¹⁵ In fact, he reported that he was able to venerate holy icons and relics, a comment that indicates that those items were already on display. Stephen came during Holy Week and attended the liturgy in the great church, which suggests that by 1349 the major structural damage had already been repaired. Another Russian pilgrimage occurred through the mediation of Theognostos—Greek Metropolitan of Moscow and a friend of Gregoras—when the embassy of the Grand Prince Symeon traveled to Constantinople in 1347, as *Troitskaia letopis'* records.¹⁶ But what is important about the Moscow envoy, as Gregoras reports, is that they brought funds that were probably needed to complete the restoration of the structure of the dome and pendentives as well as mosaic decoration.¹⁷ Thus it seems likely that the structure of the dome and pendentives was repaired between October 1346 and the visit of Stephen in 1348/49, and that it utilized some of the Moscow donation.

There was, however, a gap between the restoration of the fabric and the execution of the mosaics, evidently due to political and economic circumstances. It is probable that John VI used what remained of the Moscow donation for the restoration of Hagia Sophia to pay instead his military ally and son-in-law, the Turkish chief Orhan, for his assistance in military affairs with Genoa, which resulted in the 6 May 1352 treaty between

9 Kantakouzenos, *Eximperatoris Historiarum*, 3.30.1–2.

10 W. Emerson and R. L. Van Nice, “Hagia Sophia: The Reconstruction of the Second Dome and Its Later Repairs,” *Archaeology* 4 (1951): 162–71.

11 Kantakouzenos, *Eximperatoris Historiarum*, 3.30.7–10.

12 “Ἀξιὸν δ' ἐνταυθοὶ γενομένων καὶ τό γε μήκος καὶ πλάτος ἡμᾶς ἀφηγήσασθαι τῆς ὑπὸ τὴν κυρτὴν ἐντὸς ἐπιφάνειαν τοῦ ὀρόφου τούτου γραφείσης ἀρτίως ἀγίας εἰκόνας τῆς ἐνυποστάτου σοφίας θεοῦ, τοῦ σωτῆρος λέγω Χριστοῦ. εἶναι γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο τοῖς ὀψιγόνοις ἐράσμιον οἶμαι ἀκρόαμα. . . .” See Gregoras, *Byzantina historia*, 3.255; see also Ševčenko, “Notes on Stephen,” 172n38.

13 Gregoras, *Byzantina historia*, 3.198–99; Kantakouzenos, *Eximperatoris Historiarum*, 3.29–30.

14 Gregoras, *Byzantina historia*, 3.199–201 (quotation from 199.1–2); Kantakouzenos, *Eximperatoris Historiarum*, 3.29–30; Mango, *Materials*, 67.

15 G. P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, DOS 19 (Washington, DC, 1984), 92–93n102.

16 M. D. Priselkov, *Troitskaia Letopis': Rekonstruktsiia Teksta* (Moscow and Leningrad, 1950), 369. See also J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the Rise of Russia* (New York, 1981), 80.

17 Gregoras, *Byzantina historia*, 3.516.

Byzantium and Genoa.¹⁸ Therefore, the necessary funds for the restoration of the mosaics had to be collected from the people of Constantinople.¹⁹ Gregoras reported that John VI “was ashamed by the criticisms of the church of the wisdom of God and ordered a collection to be made from the citizens of Byzantium (Βυζαντίων) a sum from each of the richer ones or not, and the higher-ranked ones or not, and thus in three months the rest of the roof [of the naos] was completed,” toward the end of 1353.²⁰

The Mosaic Redecoration

Because the fabric of the dome had been completed in 1346, it is possible that some work on the dome mosaics took place at this time, which closely preceded the resignation of John VI.²¹ Gregoras implied that the image of Christ in the dome was completed after John VI’s resignation, and neither John VI nor Gregoras mentioned any figurative decoration (i.e., the pendentives and dome medallion) produced during his reign.²² The relationship between John VI and John V had always been tense in spite of the fact that John V married Helena, a daughter of John VI. During 1353 and 1354, the tension escalated when John VI crowned his son Matthew as coemperor in an attempt to promote him, and denied any official recognition of John V. In turn, John V, with the help of military force, defeated John VI at Constantinople, and became the sole emperor and benefactor of Hagia Sophia, on 22 November 1354.²³ In light of these events, it is unlikely that, even though planning and possibly redecoration might have started when John VI was in power, the portrait of John V would have been depicted on the eastern arch during the partial renovations in 1353.²⁴ It is therefore reasonable to assume that John V’s portrait and the celestial

beings in the pendentives were completed at the same time as the Christ in the dome, during John V’s sole reign, since they were mentioned by neither John VI nor Gregoras. A question remains, though, about the conditions in which the work on the mosaic program was accomplished after John V ascended the throne.

Shortly after his victory, John V issued a chryso-bull in which he stated that the imperial treasury was empty and he needed money to pay the troops who served in his defense against John VI.²⁵ The absence of funds in the imperial treasury during this period suggests that there may have been a temporary delay in the mosaic production and that the funds for the completion of mosaics had to be raised again, most likely from citizens of Constantinople. Considering that the work on mosaics of the dome and the eastern arch took more than a year to complete, it is possible that work on the mosaic decoration began during the reign of John VI but was not completed until after the start of John V’s reign, that is, sometime after 1355.²⁶ We do not know how much work on mosaics had been done during the reign of John VI, but according to the aforementioned sources all figurative mosaics of the dome and the eastern arch were completed under John V. Although the pendentive mosaics were not mentioned, we can assume that they were also executed during his time.²⁷

CONDITIONS OF THE MOSAIC REDECORATION

Studies of the dome masonry, pendentive repairs, and mosaic technique provide additional information

18 I. P. Medvedev, “Dogovor Vizantii i Genui ot 6 marta 1352 g,” *VizVrem* 38 (1977), 161–72, with bibliography; M. C. Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army: Arms and Society, 1204–1453* (Philadelphia, 1992), 99. The war between Byzantium and Genoa was terminated by the peace treaty.

19 Gregoras, *Byzantina historia*, 3.201–2.

20 Ibid. I would like to thank Alice-Mary Talbot for this translation.

21 Ibid. 199. It coincided with the time when Theophilos Kokkinos became patriarch: Ševčenko, “Notes on Stephen,” 171 and n. 184.

22 Gregoras, *Byzantina historia*, 3.255; Ševčenko, “Notes on Stephen,” 165–68n38; Mango, *Materials*, 68.

23 John VI retired as a monk to the Mangana monastery.

24 Teteriatnikov, “Mosaics,” 67; See also Mango, *Materials*, 68, 83.

25 L. Perria, “Due documenti greci del XIV secolo in un codice della biblioteca vaticana (vat.gr. 1335),” *JÖB* 30 (1981): 259–97, esp. 263, 273. See also S. Kyriakidis, *Warfare in Late Byzantium 1204–1453* (Leiden and Boston, 2011), 36, 226.

26 Mango, *Materials* (n. 1 above), 68.

27 Under both rulers, the work on mosaics was supervised by the grand *stratopedarches* George Astras and an Italian, Giovanni Peralta. Astras’s first name has not been mentioned by scholars because it does not appear in primary sources. The names George Astras and Giovanni Peralta appear in the 1352 treaty between Byzantium and Genoa as representatives of the Byzantine state. The event took place in the Blachernai Palace: Medvedev, “Dogovor Vizantii i Genui” (n. 18 above), 172. See also R. Ousterhout, “Constantinople, Bithynia, and Regional Developments in Later Palaeologan Architecture,” in *The Twilight of Byzantium*, eds. S. Čurčić and D. Mouriki (Princeton, 1991), 77; K.-P. Matschke, “Builders and Building in Late Byzantine Constantinople,” in *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life*, ed. N. Necipoğlu (Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2001), 315–28, esp. 319–22.

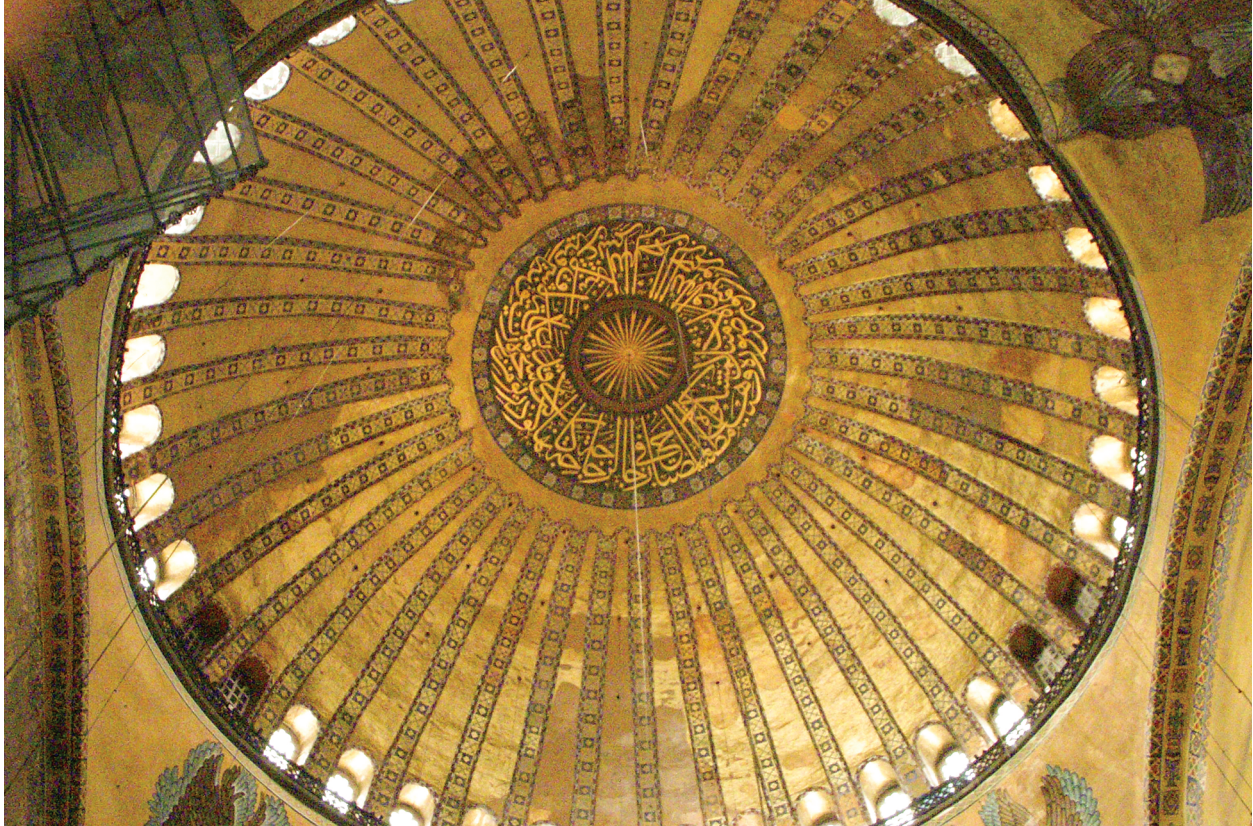


FIG. 4 Hagia Sophia, dome showing the nineteenth-century Ottoman medallion (photo by author)

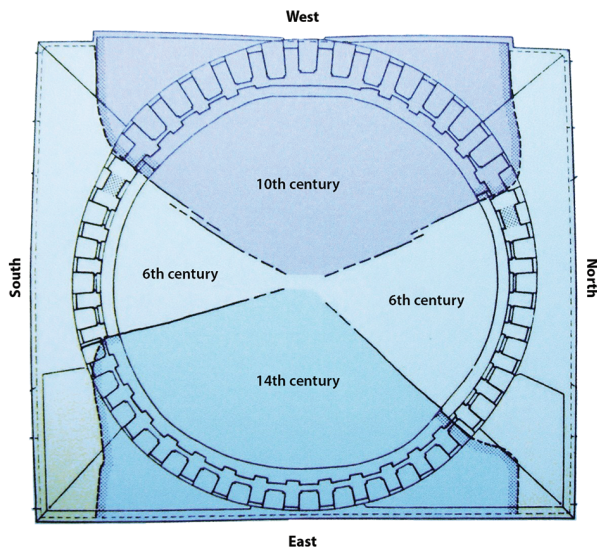


FIG. 5 Hagia Sophia, dome plan showing principal periods of construction (after Ozil and Organ, "Conservation," 247, fig. 3)

about the difficult financial conditions of this restoration campaign. The eastern section of the dome was the largest area to be rebuilt and redecorated during the fourteenth century (figs. 4–5). Van Nice and Emerson studied its masonry in the mid-twentieth century, mapping out where repairs were made.²⁸ They found that those areas have much smaller bricks than the original sixth- and restored tenth-century parts of the dome. The consistent small size of all the bricks used in the fourteenth-century repair indicates that they were made specially for it, although the Palaiologan masons preserved as much older masonry as they could, presumably in order to conserve materials. They even left unchanged the vertical bulge in the northeast

28 Emerson and Van Nice, "Hagia Sophia" (n. 10 above), figs. 7, 12, 15–16; R. L. Van Nice, *Saint Sophia in Istanbul: An Architectural Survey*, second installment (Washington, DC, 1965); R. J. Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia: Architecture, Structure and Liturgy of Justinian's Great Church* (New York, 1988), 90–92, figs. 106a–9.



FIG. 6 Hagia Sophia, northeast pendentive (photo by author)

pendentive (still visible at its center) that caused an uneven curve of the dome ring and created a potential structural problem (fig. 6). In addition, in the eastern section of the dome, some ribs are crudely executed; they have an uneven shape and some are even convex instead of concave. Fortunately, though, this repair of the eastern segment of the dome and pendentives has held for over six hundred years.

The dome now culminates in a central medallion with an Ottoman inscription, executed by Kazasker Mustafa Izzet Efendi during the reign of the sultan Abdülmecid (r. 1839–1861).²⁹ Because examination of the masonry in this location has been impossible, it is not clear whether the eastern segment of the masonry under the medallion was also rebuilt during the Palaiologan restoration. The northeast and southeast

joints of the fourteenth-century segment of the dome wall, however, point toward the center of the dome, suggesting that when cracks in the dome occurred, they consistently ran toward its center. So it is likely that structural repair and thus the redecoration of mosaics was also necessary under the central medallion.

In 1992, with the support of UNESCO, the consolidation, cleaning, and study of the techniques of the dome wall and rib mosaics were undertaken by the Central Laboratory for Restoration and Conservation (Istanbul) and an international group of experts.³⁰ Two phases of restoration were identified, as seen on the conservators' projection plan that shows the extent of restorations in different periods (fig. 7). The first was

29 S. Eyice, "Ayasofia," *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul, 1993), 1:450–56. For the history of the previously existing Ottoman inscription, see Mango, *Materials* (n. 1 above), 89–90.

30 R. Ozil, "The Conservation of the Dome Mosaics of Hagia Sophia," in *Light on Top of the Black Hill: Studies Presented to Halet Çambel*, eds. G. Arsebük, M. J. Mellink, and W. Schirmer (Istanbul, 1998), 543–53, esp. 545–46; R. Ozil and T. Organ, "The Conservation of the Mosaics in the Dome of Hagia Sophia, 1992–2002," in *Mosaics of Anatolia*, ed. Sözen (n. 2 above), 245–56, esp. 247, 250–52.

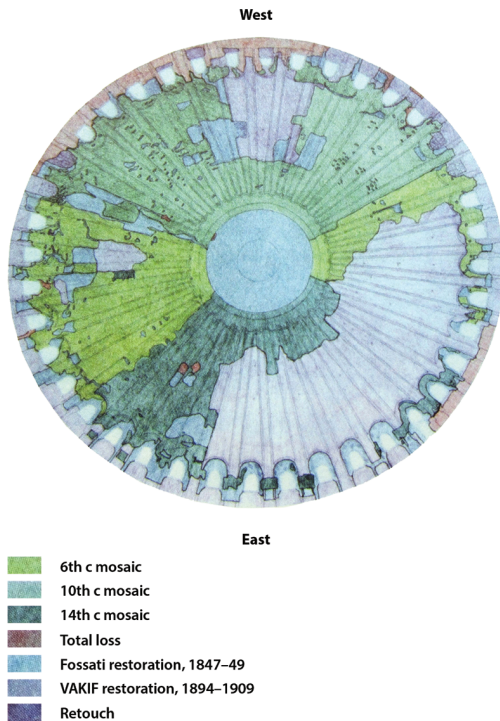


FIG. 7 Hagia Sophia, dome projection plan showing the extent of the decoration and restoration (after Ozil and Organ, "Conservation," 247, fig. 2)

carried out by brothers Gaspare and Giuseppe Fossati from 1847 to 1849.³¹ They applied plaster and stenciled paint to a large area of the lost mosaics. A second phase of restoration, the largest area, was undertaken between 1894 and 1909 by the Vakif (Directorate Generale of Pious Foundations). Mango suggests that the Palaiologan Christ mosaic was replaced first by an Ottoman medallion at some point in the eighteenth century and that the later medallion was replaced during the Fossati restoration.³²

The image of Christ in the dome was still visible after the conquest of Constantinople in 1453, which we know from the reports of several visitors to the church.³³ Mango suggests that the dome's image was removed between 1652 and 1672, pointing out that the last visitor to report seeing it was Paul of Aleppo, on 2 November 1652, and that the image was not recorded



FIG. 8 Hagia Sophia, detail showing fourteenth-century repair and horizontal suture at center (photo by author)

in the interior drawing by another visitor, Guillaume-Josef Grelot, in 1672.³⁴ The mosaics were in shabby condition by the time the Fossati brothers began to work. In the early eighteenth century, Lady Wortley Montagu traveled to Constantinople and wrote in a letter to Lady Bristol that during her visit to Hagia Sophia she was presented with a gift—mosaic cubes that had fallen from the vaults of the church.³⁵ In 1992, a special search was made by conservators for any mosaic remains behind the Ottoman medallion. Numerous holes were drilled through the inscription, and samples were taken from underneath it.³⁶ Conservators found two layers of plaster, one probably a rendering bed and the other an intermediary bed for the fourteenth-century mosaics. There was no setting bed and no tesserae were found. The first Ottoman medallion must have replaced the final layer of fourteenth-century plaster and any mosaics that were present.

The study of the dome mosaic technique also documents a decline in the quality of production and execution in the fourteenth century as compared to earlier work.³⁷ The tesserae had irregular shapes and spacing, and were carelessly applied. Artisans mixed tesserae of

34 Ibid.

35 *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. R. Halsband (Oxford, 1965), 1:398–99. See also R. S. Nelson, *Hagia Sophia, 1850–1950* (Chicago and London, 2004), 27.

36 Ozil, "Conservation," esp. 545–47; Ozil and Organ, "Conservation," 245–56, esp. 253.

37 Ozil, "Conservation," 545–46; Ozil and Organ, "Conservation," 250–52.

31 On the Fossati restoration, see Ozil and Organ, "Conservation," 255.

32 Mango, *Materials* (n. 1 above), 89–91.

33 Ibid., 127–28.

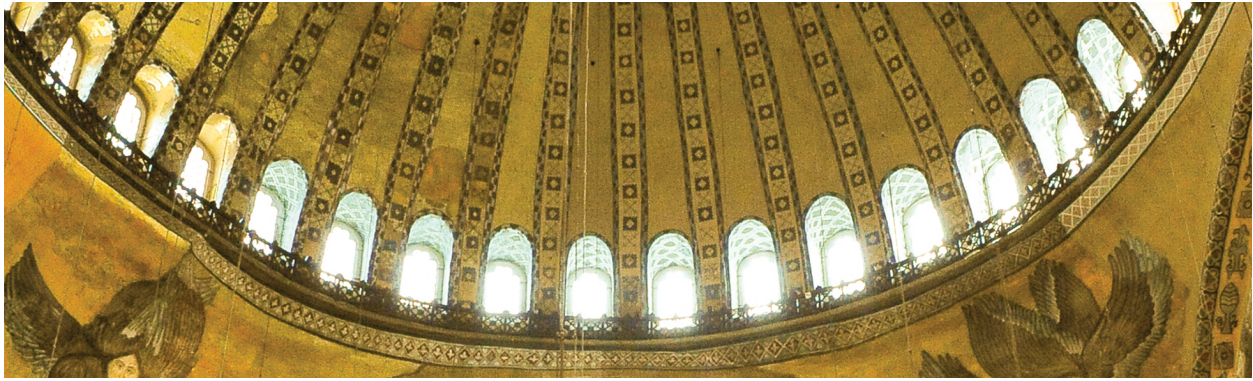


FIG. 9 Hagia Sophia, dome detail showing windows (photo by author)

colored glass and silver in the background where earlier there had been only golden tesserae. Grey stone was also used instead of the more expensive silver, and red stone was used instead of red glass (fig. 8). Window soffits were plastered and painted in a bold bluish-green diaper pattern upon a light green background, in contrast to the in situ sixth-century window sills that were covered with golden mosaics (figs. 9–10).³⁸ This painted pattern that Palaiologan artisans applied caused the window sills to be darker, which noticeably subdues the light that comes through the windows of the dome.

In addition to the abovementioned poor workmanship, materials, and redecoration of the window-sills, there is also a noticeable change in the execution of the mosaics. There is an irregular horizontal suture line, visible only at close range, that divides the upper and lower levels of the fourteenth-century dome mosaics (fig. 8). This rough, oblique line on the golden background between the ribs separates different methods of setting tesserae. Usually artisans apply wet plaster on small areas of the wall that would be possible to cover within the day. Sutures between such areas are occasionally noticeable, but there would be no difference in the setting of the tesserae if they were set by the same hands. There is a visible difference in the setting of the dome tesserae and their spacing, which can be explained only



FIG. 10 Hagia Sophia, dome detail showing fourteenth-century windowsill decoration (from Antoniadis, *Εκφρασεις της Αγίας Σοφίας*, 3:123, fig. 625)

38 This diaper pattern in the fourteenth-century dome window was photographed by E. M. Antoniadis (Αντωνιάδης), *Εκφρασεις της Αγίας Σοφίας, ήτοι, Μελέτη συνδυαστική και αναλυτική υπό έποψιν αρχιτεκτονικήν, αρχαιολογικήν και ιστορικήν του πολυθρύλητου τεμένους Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, vols. 1–3 (Athens, 1904–9), 3:123, fig. 625.



FIG. 11 Hagia Sophia, dome rib monogram (photo by author)

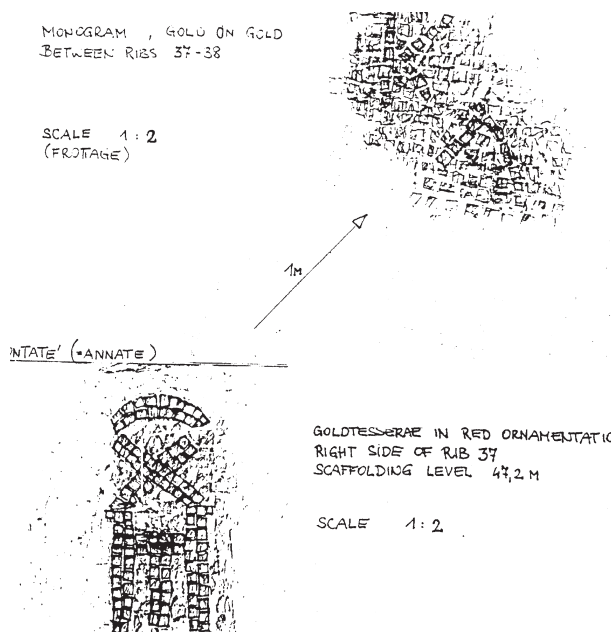


FIG. 12 Hagia Sophia, anonymous tracing of mosaic monogram and initials between ribs thirty-seven and thirty-eight of the dome (courtesy of the conservators)

by a pause in the execution of mosaics, a change of workshops, or a faster and cheaper pace of work.

There is another interesting feature that relates to this suture. Just below it, on the side face of rib thirty-seven, there is a golden tesserae monogram with an X above an M on a stepped grey background (figs. 8, 11). Above the X there is a tilde (a line that signals an abbreviation). Mosaic monograms above and below the joint line are briefly mentioned in the conservators' report, but neither is described or illustrated.³⁹ However, an unpublished tracing from the conservators' report depicts the letters K and A above the joint line, made in gold tesserae on golden background between ribs thirty-seven and thirty-eight (fig. 12). Similar monograms that represent wealthy patrons are found in seals, manuscripts, icons, and church murals throughout the Palaiologan period.⁴⁰ Kariye Camii, for instance, exhibits monograms of its founder, Theodore Metochites, both in the brickwork of the church exterior and on the cornice of the naos dome and mullion capitals in the apse window.⁴¹ There are also portraits of wealthy patrons painted above the tombs in the outer narthex of the same church, and the garments of some figures in tombs E and F display numerous monograms related to their family names.⁴²

In Byzantine manuscripts, a monogram like the one in the dome mosaics of Hagia Sophia can stand for the word *monachos* (a monk), but in most cases it stands for the name Michael.⁴³ We find an identical monogram near the figure of the archangel Michael on the golden seal of Czar Constantine Asen (in the National Institute of Archaeology with Museum at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences department of numismatics).⁴⁴ Another example is a medallion enclosing a bust of the archangel Michael in the apex

39 Ozil, "Conservation," 546.

40 R. G. Ousterhout, *The Architecture of the Kariye Camii in Istanbul*, DOS 25 (Washington, DC, 1987), 135–36.

41 Ibid.

42 For tombs E and F, see P. A. Underwood, *The Kariye Djami: Historical Introduction and Description of the Mosaics and Frescoes* (New York, 1966), 3: figs. 541, 546–47.

43 Byzantine monks often worked as artisans. I would like to thank Dr. Nadia Kavirus for sharing information on the use of this particular monogram in Byzantine manuscripts.

44 M. Vassilaki, "Gold Seal of Czar Constantine Asen," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557)*, ed. H. C. Evans (New York, 2004), 36–37, fig. 10 obverse.

of the triumphal arch in the parekklesion of Kariye Camii (fig. 13).⁴⁵ This medallion is inscribed on either side with OA and X above MI with a tilde on top. In the case of the Hagia Sophia mosaic, it seems likely that X above M stands for the name Michael, possibly representing the artisan's name or his status as a monk. Inscriptions of artisans' names, or more rarely their initials, are found in Palaiologan art, especially in frescoes and icons, and scholars attribute such inscriptions or initials as personal notes that express humility, religious devotion, and hopes for salvation.⁴⁶ The monograms or initials of artisans in mosaics are not known probably because so few of them have survived from this period. As for the monograms at Hagia Sophia, K and A were probably the initials of an artisan who worked on the upper section of the dome, above the joint line, and the X above M can be seen as a marker for the beginning of an artisan's work below the suture line. The monograms also have private connotations because the artisan probably chose the location on the rib for his initials in order to be close to the image of Christ, as an act of devotion and personal salvation. The monogram is indeed private, for it is not visible to the viewer standing in the naos.

The features of the fourteenth-century dome segment reflect shortages of materials (i.e., the use of cheap



FIG. 13 Kariye Camii parekklesion, detail showing icon of Archangel Michael (photo by author)

materials and spolia tesserae) as well as poor execution of both masonry and mosaics, both of which can be attributed to limited funds. The unstable political situation, the tensions between John VI and John V, and the shortage of funds probably explain why the restoration of the structural repairs and creation of mosaics had considerable gaps that extended over long periods of time.

The state was devastated by civil wars and poverty.⁴⁷ The Black Death of 1347–49 further contributed to the impoverishment of the state and especially the city of Constantinople. The imperial treasury was empty; during the coronation of John VI, Gregoras reports, John's crown was made of glass paste jewels

45 Underwood, *Kariye Djami*, 3:472 and fig. 242.

46 T. Gouma-Peterson, "Manuel and John Phokas and Artistic Personality in Late Byzantine Painting," *Gesta* 22, no. 2 (1983): 159–70; S. Kalopissi-Verti, "Οι ζωγράφοι στην ύστερη Βυζαντινή κοινωνία: Η μαρτυρία των επιγραφών," in *Το πορτραίτο του καλλιτέχνη στο Βυζάντιο*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Herakleion, 1997), 121–15; idem, "Painters in Late Byzantine Society: The Evidence of Church Inscriptions," *CahArch* 42 (1994): 139–58; B. Todić, "Signatures' des peintres Michel Astrapas et Eutychios: fonction et signification," in *Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη του Σωτήρη Κίτσα* (Thessalonike, 2001), 643–62, esp. 652–53. For the use of artists' signatures in icons, see M. Evangelatou, "Between East and West: The Symbolism of Space in the Art of Domenikos Theotokopoulos (El Greco)," *Proceedings of Renaissance Encounters: Greek East and Latin West, Symposium for the 30th Anniversary of the Program in Hellenic Studies, Princeton University*, 12–14 November 2009 (Leiden and Boston, 2013), 147–84; idem, "Religious Inspiration and Artistic Aspiration in El Greco's Art: The Evidence of the Signatures" in the 10th International Conference of Arts and Humanities Proceedings, Hawaii University, Honolulu. Artisans' initials are also found as abbreviation (MI for the name Michael Astrapa) in fresco decoration in the church of the Virgin Peribleptos, Ochrid: I. Drpić, "Painter as Scribe: Artistic Identity and the Arts of Graphē in Late Byzantium," *Word and Image, A Journal of Verbal/Visual Inquiry* 29, no. 3 (2015): 334–53, esp. 341–47, figs. 17–19.

47 V. Kidonopoulos, *Bauten in Konstantinopel, 1204–1328: Verfall und Zerstörung, Restaurierung, Umbau und Neubau von Profan- und Sakralbauten*, Mainzer Veröffentlichungen zur Byzantinistik (Wiesbaden, 1994); idem, "The Urban Physiognomy of Constantinople from the Latin Conquest through the Palaiologan Era," in *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557), Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, Metropolitan Museum of Art Symposia, ed. S. T. Brooks (New York, 2006), 98–117, esp. 109; A. Laiou, "Sto Byzantio ton Palaiologon: Oikonomika kai politistika phainomena," in *Euphrosynon: Aphieroma ston Manole Chatzedake*, ed. E. Kypraiou, 2 vols. (Athens, 1991–92), 1:291. On the poverty of the state during the late Palaiologan period, see Laiou, "Sto Byzantio" and also A.-M. Talbot, "Revival and Decline: Voices from the Byzantine Capital," in *Byzantium*, ed. Evans, 17–25.

and the tableware was made of pewter and earthenware.⁴⁸ He also reported (ca. 1341) that many buildings of Constantinople were in a state of disrepair, including the Great Palace and the Patriarchate.⁴⁹ Funding to restore the fabric of Hagia Sophia had to come, as Gregoras stated, from the citizens of Constantinople.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the Moscow princely donation for the restoration of Hagia Sophia suggests that there was a serious shortage of funds in Constantinople, and even those were insufficient for the completion of the restoration of the church's wall and its mosaics. These conditions may explain the suture line in the background of the dome—a visible mark of this troubled conservation campaign. This could also be a result of political circumstances during the change of power with the accession of John V and the resignation of John VI, who, as he himself stated, supervised the start of mosaic production. In the following, I turn to the mosaic program of the dome and pendentives and examine their spatial setting, aesthetic, and the role of their images.

The Dome and Pendentives

The dome, rising above the center of the naos, presents a dramatic appearance. Its center is occupied by a medallion, from which forty ribs radiate downward like rays of light. The dome is supported by four pendentives and rests upon the four major arches of the basilica. In order to understand how the new Palaiologan mosaics fit into the older structure of the church, we shall evaluate first the decoration of the dome wall and windows, followed by the dome medallion and pendentives.

48 Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia* (n. 8 above), 2.788.15–789.8; R. Macrides, “Ceremonies and the City: The Court in Fourteenth-Century Constantinople,” in *Pseudo-Kodinos*, ed. Macrides, Munitize, and Angelov (n. 7 above), 218.

49 Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia* (n. 8 above), 1.568.

50 Matschke, “Builders and Building” (n. 27 above). “Καὶ ταῦτα μὲν τοῦτον ἔσχε τὸν τρόπον. ὀλίγαι δ’ ἐκεῖθεν παρήλθον ἡμέραι καὶ διάδοχος γίνεται τοῦ βαθμοῦ Φιλόθεος ὁ Κόκκινος, ἐκ τῆς κατὰ Πείρινθον Ἡρακλείας μετατεθείς. τοὺς γε μὴν ὑπὲρ τοῦ νεῶ τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ σοφίας ἐλέγχους ἐκείνους ὁ Καντακουζηνὸς αἰσχυρθεὶς ἔρανον πρὸς τῶν Βυζαντίων κελεύει συμφορηθῆναι κατ’ ἀξίαν ἐκάστων τῶν τε μάλα πλουσίων καὶ μὴ, καὶ τῶν μᾶλλον ἐνδόξων καὶ μὴ, καὶ οὕτως ἐν τρισὶ μῆσὶ καὶ τὸ τῆς ὀροφῆς τοῦ νεῶ λειπόμενον ἐκτετέλεσται.” See Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia* (n. 8 above), 3.201–2.

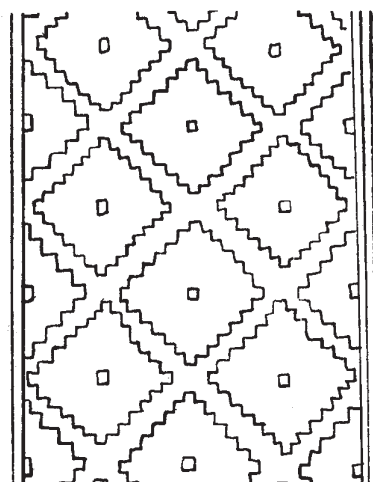


FIG. 14 Sopoćani katholikon, detail drawing of ornamental band (after Janc, *Ornamenti*, pl. I: fig. 4)

The Dome Wall

The current dome was rebuilt and redecorated after an earthquake in 558, and sections from that reconstruction still survive in the north and south sides. After a later earthquake, in 989, the architect Trdat repaired the western segment, which was completed in 994/95 (fig. 5).⁵¹ Following the 1343 and 1344 earthquakes, a large eastern section that included thirteen ribs had to be replaced. Decoration of both the tenth- and fourteenth-century sections followed the general plan of the sixth-century mosaics, thus preserving the dome's visual integrity. Throughout, the background was composed of golden tesserae, and the dome ring and ribs were covered by patterns of diagonal crosses alternating with diamonds (fig. 4). In the fourteenth-century eastern restoration, the stepped patterns on the side faces of the ribs were executed in grey and red stone (fig. 8), rather than the red and silver tesserae used elsewhere, probably because of a shortage of materials, as stated above. Nevertheless, the upper faces of the ribs follow the sixth-century pattern, although the mosaics are crudely executed.

However, the decoration of the dome windows in the eastern section was completely changed by Palaiologan artisans (figs. 9–10). They were originally covered with gold tesserae, but in the fourteenth-century restorations, their sills were plastered and frescoed with

51 Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia* (n. 28 above), 91–95.

a diaper pattern in blue green on a light green background.⁵² Each diamond was filled with a bold step design also painted in blue green. This treatment, which subdued the light coming through the windows of the dome, may have been intentional because churches in the Palaiologan period have less interior light than do churches in the early Byzantine period.⁵³ This type of diaper pattern was new to Hagia Sophia, and was not part of the rich repertoire of motifs that appear in the cathedral's earlier mosaics. It may, however, be compared with similar patterns in the window decoration of some Palaiologan churches, including those at Sopoćani and Dečani (fig. 14).⁵⁴ The bold step design was also used in the ornamental bands above the upper cornices of both narthexes of Kariye Camii in Constantinople (ca. 1320).⁵⁵

The Dome Medallion: Christ

In order to understand the new role of the image of Christ as Pantokrator ("All-sovereign") in the fourteenth-century decoration of the dome medallion, a review of the central medallion's history is helpful (fig. 4). According to Paul Silentiarios, a poet and court official in the reign of Justinian, the dome medallion of Hagia Sophia was originally adorned with a large cross.⁵⁶ After iconoclasm, figural imagery was introduced first in the naos, during the reign of Basil I (r. 867–886).⁵⁷ The image of the Pantokrator may have been placed in the dome medallion together with other images in the naos at that time. As Jane Timken Matthews has noted, the first reference to Christ as Pantokrator in Hagia Sophia appeared in ninth-century epigram verses on its north and south tympana, verses that may have been addressed to an image in the dome.⁵⁸ The western section of the dome wall, replaced by Trdat, was well below the dome medallion itself, so any immediately

post-Iconoclastic mosaics at the top were probably unaffected by the earthquake of 989, and they may actually have survived until the fourteenth-century earthquake and restoration of the dome.⁵⁹

The new image of Christ was placed in the dome medallion of Hagia Sophia during the Palaiologan campaign and is known from Gregoras's description:

Having reached this point, it would be fitting to set down the length and breadth of the holy image of the enhypostatic, Wisdom of God, I mean Christ our Savior, that was recently depicted on the inner curved surface of the roof. It is worth reflecting, I think, that when one looks up [at the image] from below, one is unable [to apprehend] by means of sight its true proportions and transmit them to the mind, since sight is unusually deceived by the interposition of distance between the spectator and the object seen. . . . The height [of the head] from its summit to the tip of the beard is 28 palms, its width 14, the first finger 8½ long, and the others in proportion. Each eye is 3 palms, and the nose is nearly 8. Now that I have given these elements, the more accomplished painters will be able, by using proportional analogy, to reckon straightaway the length and breadth of the other members and parts as well as the conformation of the entire body of that holy image of the Savior.⁶⁰

Mango discusses only the measurements in this description and suggests that they are not accurate.⁶¹ Exact or not, Gregoras probably intended for his measurements to show how grand the image was. All churches in the Palaiologan period were much smaller than Hagia Sophia, with proportionately reduced domes and images. Gregoras explains that because of the considerable height of the space, the size of Hagia Sophia's image is difficult to comprehend from the ground. The huge image of Christ must have made a profound impression on Gregoras's contemporaries, an impression that led him to spend time listing its measurements to make a statement about its enormous size.

52 Ozil, "Conservation" (n. 30 above), 546.

53 For reduction of light in middle and late Byzantine churches, see C. Nesbitt, "Shaping the Sacred: Light and the Experience of Worship in Middle Byzantine Churches," *BMGS* 36, no. 2 (2012): 139–60.

54 Z. Janc, *Ornamenti fresaka iz Srbije i Makedonije od XII do sredine XV veka* (Belgrade, 1961), pl. I: figs. 4 and 6.

55 Underwood, *Kariye Djami* (n. 42 above), 2:12, 17, 20.

56 C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312–1453: Sources and Documents* (Toronto, 1986), 83.

57 Mango, *Materials* (n. 1 above), 63–66; J. Timken Matthews, "The Byzantine Use of the Title Pantokrator," *OCP* 44 (1978): 442–62.

58 Timken Matthews, "Byzantine Use," 442–62. About this inscription, see also Mango, *Materials* (n. 1 above), 63–66.

59 Mainstone, *Hagia Sophia* (n. 28 above), 91–95.

60 "Astrolabica," ed. A. Delatte, *Anecdota Atheniensia* (Liège-Paris, 1939), 2:255–56; for translation, see Mango, *Art*, 249.

61 Mango, *Materials* (n. 1 above), 87–88.

Gregoras's text does not define the iconographic type of Christ depicted in the dome. Mango notes that it could have been either a full-length image (with Christ enthroned or seated on a rainbow) or, more plausibly, given its dimensions, a bust.⁶² The image most frequently used in Byzantine church domes was a traditional bust of Christ holding a book in his left hand and blessing with his right. Mango calls this figure "Christ Pantokrator." Indeed the bust of Christ in the dome is commonly associated with the appellation *Pantokrator* in Byzantine churches, but because this term does not appear in Gregoras's description of Christ in Hagia Sophia, a brief discussion is warranted. Timken Matthews argues that *Pantokrator* does not define an iconographic type.⁶³ This epithet is used to designate God and the individual persons of the Trinity,⁶⁴ and is found in Revelation 1:8 and elsewhere. In Byzantine art it applies especially to Christ's kingship. It is occasionally included in the inscriptions that accompany images of Christ in the domes of Byzantine churches from the twelfth century onward.⁶⁵ In the thirteenth-century church of Omorphi Ekklesia in Attika, for example, a bust-length Christ holding the Holy Gospel is labeled *Pantokrator*.⁶⁶

62 Ibid., 87.

63 Timken Matthews, "Byzantine Use," 461–62.

64 K. Wessel, "Christusbild," *RBK* 1:966–1047; A. W. Carr, "Gospel Frontispieces from the Comnenian Period," *Gesta* 21 (1982): 7–10; W. Warland, *Das Brustbild Christi: Studien zur spätantiken und frühbyzantinischen Bildgeschichte* (Rome, Freiburg, Vienna, 1986); I. Stouphe-Poulemenou, "Palaiochristianikes parastaseis tou Christou kai ho byzantinos Pantokrator," *Theologia* 57 (1986): 793–854; N. P. Ševčenko, "Christ: Types of Christ," *ODB* 1:437–39. On the use of the Pantokrator, see F. Bury, *Der Pantokrator: Ontologie und Eschatologie als Grundlage der Lehre von Gott* (Hamburg, 1969); C. Capizzi, *Pantokrator: Saggio d'esegesi letterario-iconografica* (Rome, 1964); reviewed by K. Wessel in *BZ* 58 (1965): 141–47, and J. Myslivec in *BS* 27 (1966): 427–32; K. Wessel, "Das Bild des Pantokrator," in *Polychronion: Festschrift Franz Dölger zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. P. Wirth (Heidelberg, 1966), 521–35; C. P. Charalampidis, "A propos de la signification trinitaire de la main gauche du Pantokrator," *OrChr* 38 (1972): 260–65; G. P. Podskalsky, "Pantokrator," *ODB* 3:1574.

65 For the list of churches and inscriptions, see Timken Matthews, "Byzantine Use," esp. 445–51. For the use of the Pantokrator in domes of Byzantine churches, see O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (New York, 1976), 17–22.

66 A. Basiliki-Karakatsani, *Oi Toichographeis tēs Omorphēs Ekklesiās stēn Athēna* (Athens, 1971), 35–36. See also Timken Matthews, "Byzantine Use" (n. 57 above), 447–48.



FIG. 15 Silver stavraton of John V Palaiologos (r. 1341–1391), obverse and reverse (courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC, BZC.1960.125.1674; *DOC* 5.2: pl. 65, no. 1233)

It is therefore reasonable to designate the traditional Byzantine dome (i.e., the bust of Christ holding the Holy Gospel) as the image of Christ Pantokrator. I will adduce further evidence to support Mango's suggestion that this was indeed the type depicted in the dome of Hagia Sophia.

After John V (r. 1354–1376) became sole emperor he issued a silver coin known as a *stavraton* (fig. 15).⁶⁷ Its obverse shows a bust of Christ holding a book and blessing with his right hand, framed by a narrow border of alternating pellets and stars. The inscription IC XC flanks the head at the left and right. The emperor himself is depicted on the reverse in a small bust portrait, encircled by the inscription "John Palaiologos, lord [*despotes*] by the grace of God, emperor of the Romans."⁶⁸ The nimbus around the crowned head of the elaborately garbed ruler is traditional. The bust form of his representation, however, is quite unusual for the times, and clearly imitates the coin's obverse Christ. The linkage between this particular emperor and this particular bust-length Christ must have had a special significance. As mentioned above, the mosaic of Christ in the dome was completed after John V defeated John VI, and this may explain the choice of bust type of Christ on the imperial coin.

I suggest that the image of Christ on the stavraton of John V was not simply a generic church dome figure of the period, but rather was the specific bust of Christ

67 *DOC* 5.1:192–206; 5.2: pl. 65, no. 1233. See also nos. 1231, 1232, and 1234; *Byzantium*, ed. Evans (n. 44 above), 38, no. 12D (obverse and reverse).

68 *DOC* 5.2: page opposite pl. 65.



FIG. 16 Coin of John V Palaiologos (r. 1341–1391), obverse and reverse (Byzantine Collection, courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC, BZC.1989.I.64; *DOC* 5.2: pl. 66, no. 1242)



FIG. 17 Coin of Manuel II (r. 1391–1425), obverse and reverse (Byzantine Collection, courtesy of Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC, BZC.1960.125.95; *DOC* 5.2: pl. 71, 1325)

in the dome of Hagia Sophia. The coin was struck just after that mosaic image was probably completed. The inscription on its reverse border is similar to the one accompanying John V's mosaic portrait on the eastern arch of Hagia Sophia, known from the Fossati drawings: "John Palaiologos in Christ God, faithful emperor and autokrator of the Romans."⁶⁹ Middle Byzantine coins with a bust of Christ may have been modeled on dome imagery, but Palaiologan coins before those of John V did not employ that type.⁷⁰ Only after the creation of the new mosaic image in Hagia Sophia did this image appear on the emperor's coinage. It had become important once again as a manifestation of imperial power and legitimacy. At a time of political instability and poverty of the state, John V deployed it on his stavraton to demonstrate that his authority

was sanctioned by God. On some later copies of this coin, the inscription O COTIP (Savior) was added to the image, which was the precise epithet that Gregoras used in his description of the mosaic Christ (fig. 16).⁷¹ The emperor's successors, Manuel II (r. 1391–1425) and John VIII (r. 1425–1448), presumably approved of this imperial strategy because they continued to strike coins with a similar divine bust in a medallion (fig. 17).⁷²

I have argued elsewhere that the mosaic program of Hagia Sophia's eastern arch, dome, and pendentives was probably planned by John VI, as well as by John V.⁷³ One of John VI's coins demonstrates the impact of the program upon the iconography of imperial coinage even during the planning stages.⁷⁴ An image of John VI's mother, Theodora, is on the reverse. The obverse depicts John Prodromos, with the beginning of the verse "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29). This same text passage (now mostly effaced but known from the Fossati drawing) was inscribed on the saint's scroll in his mosaic image on the eastern arch.⁷⁵ Although the verse was common on Prodromos's images, it was not the one most often used on his scroll on icons and Byzantine church murals during the Palaiologan period.⁷⁶ The presence of the same inscription on John VI's coin and on the eastern arch of Hagia Sophia is therefore not coincidental. Like his successor, John VI appears to have deployed the imagery planned for Hagia Sophia in order to link himself to Christ. Of course, John VI was no longer in power when the mosaics of the eastern arch were completed. It was John V who was ultimately depicted with the Virgin and Prodromos on the eastern arch.

So what did Hagia Sophia's image of Christ, so crucial for John V, signify? As noted above, Gregoras does not apply the epithet *Pantokrator* in his description. Instead, he emphasizes qualities of Christ that were particularly important in the Orthodox theology and spirituality of his time. First, he refers to the mosaic as a "holy image of the enhypostatic." The latter clearly

71 *DOC* 5.2, pl. 66, no. 1242.

72 *DOC* 5.2: pl. 71, no. 1325; *DOC* 5.2: pl. 81, nos. 1611–27.

73 Teteriatnikov, "Mosaics" (n. 3 above).

74 *DOC* 5.1:182–83.

75 Mango, *Materials* (n. 1 above), 73–74. See also Teteriatnikov, "Mosaics" (n. 3 above).

76 Teteriatnikov, "Mosaics" (n. 3 above). The text that was more often used in Palaiologan icons and frescoes was from Matthew 3:2.

69 Mango, *Materials* (n. 1 above), 75, fig. 92.

70 *DOC* 3.1:148–50.

refers to the second person of the Trinity, the subject then at the core of hesychast teaching. In July 1351, only a few years before completion of the new dome mosaics, John VI and John V had presided over the Council of Constantinople that approved Gregory Palamas's teachings, especially on God, as official Orthodox doctrine.⁷⁷ Palamas focused on the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit in man's knowledge of God, but also (and even more crucially) on Christ. The lost mosaic of the hetoimasia on the eastern arch of Hagia Sophia (known from Fossati's drawings) clearly reflected that focus. Christ was evoked by the depiction of the throne of God with a wreath and cross, a symbol of his passion, but the usual representation of the Spirit as a dove was not included. Likewise, the dome mosaic was, in Gregoras's description, the image of the "Wisdom of God, I mean Christ our Savior." In another context the epithet *Wisdom of God* could refer to the dedicatory name of the cathedral, but Gregoras clearly explains that to which he refers: "I mean Christ our Savior." The opposition seems directly related to hesychast thought, and specifically to the teaching of Palamas.

The importance of the Wisdom of God for Palamas is attested by his frequent use of the epithet. For example, he writes in the *Triads*:

I hold that among God's gifts some are natural; they are granted indiscriminately to all, before the law, under the law, and after the law. Others are supernatural and full of mystery. These latter gifts I hold to be higher than the former, as those who have been judged worthy to receive the Wisdom of the Spirit are superior to the whole tribe of Hellenists. I hold also that philosophy is one of the natural gifts of God, as are also the discoveries of human reason, the sciences . . . I give each the honor it merits. . . .⁷⁸

In another work Palamas notes:

Goodness is not one part of God, Wisdom another, and Majesty or Providence still another;

God is wholly Goodness, wholly Wisdom, wholly Providence, and wholly Majesty. . . .⁷⁹

The words of Palamas may well have been the source of Gregoras's terminology. Other people certainly coupled this theological concept with such visual images, exemplified by an icon of Christ in the Byzantine Museum in Thessalonike from the second half of the fourteenth century, in which the image of Christ is labeled "Sophia tou Theou" (Wisdom of God).⁸⁰ The icon came from Hagia Sophia in Thessalonike, a cathedral built in the early Byzantine period and completely rebuilt in the eighth century. The commission of an icon in the second half of the fourteenth century with the epithet *Sophia* may have been inspired by the teachings of Palamas. In fact, Palamas was the archbishop of Thessalonike until his death in 1359 and no earlier icons of Christ with the epithet of *Sophia* are known.

The union of the Christian faithful with Christ through the Eucharist was equally important in hesychast teaching, and was likewise emphasized in the dome mosaic. Thomas Mathews points out that the popularity of Christ Pantokrator dome images during the ninth century and later stemmed from developments in Byzantine liturgy as much as from its suitability for centrally planned church buildings.⁸¹ Christ

79 G. Palamas, *Writings*, vol. 2 (Thessalonike, 1996), 209; Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas*, 125.

80 This icon is from the church of Hagia Sophia, Thessalonike. Earlier scholars dated it to the end of the fourteenth century: G. Sotiriou, *Guide du Musée byzantin d'Athènes* (Athens, 1953), 19, pl. XX; M. M. Chatzidakis, *Βυζαντινό Μουσείο, Τα Ελληνικά Μουσεία* (Athens, 1974), cat. no. 4, p. 184, fig. 18; M. Chatzidakis, G. Babič, "Le icone della Penisola Balcanica e delle isole Greche," in *Le icone*, K. Weitzmann et al., (Milan, 1983), 192; *From Byzantium to El Greco, Greek Frescoes and Icons, Royal Academy of Arts, London (27th March–21st June, 1987)* (Athens, 1987), cat. no. 20, 85 and 159–60; M. Acheimastou-Potamianou, ed., *Holy Image, Holy Space: Icons and Frescoes from Greece* (Athens, 1988), cat. no. 30, 193, pl. 30. Baltoyanni dated it somewhat earlier, to the third quarter of the fourteenth century: Ch. Baltoyanni, *Εικόνες: Ιησούς Χριστός στην ενσάρκωση και στο Πάθος* (Pergamos, 2003), cat. no. 4, 42–43, pls. 6–7; A. Tsilipakou, "Icon with Christ Pantokrator the Wisdom of God," in *Heaven and Earth: The Art of Byzantium from Greek Collections*, exhibition catalog, ed. A. Drandaki, D. Papanikola-Bakirtzi, and A. Tourta (Athens, 2013), 134–35.

81 T. F. Mathews, "The Transformation Symbolism in Byzantine Architecture and the Meaning of the Pantocrator in the Dome," in *Church and People in Byzantium*, 20th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, ed. R. Morris (Birmingham, 1990), 191–214.

77 J. Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas and Orthodox Spirituality*, trans. A. Fiske (Crestwood, NY, 1974), 103.

78 G. Palamas, *The Triads*, ed. John Meyendorff (New York, 1983), 2.1.25, pp. 275–77; Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas*, 109.



FIG. 18 Hagia Sophia, western pendentives (photo by author)

holding a Gospel book echoed the first part of the divine liturgy, the reading of the Gospel. Later in the service, the Eucharist was received by the faithful under the dome. Communicants were to be spiritually united with Christ while they physically saw him in the mosaic above. While relevant in many Byzantine churches, such spiritual union was particularly important in Hagia Sophia in Thessalonike, the center of hesychast teaching. Palamas explains the essential concept:

In his incomparable love for men, the son of God did not merely unite his divine hypostasis to our nature, clothing himself with a living body and an intelligent soul, “to appear on earth and live with men” (Bar. 3:28), but O incomparable and magnificent miracle! He unites himself also to human hypostases, joining himself to each of the faithful by communion in his holy Body. For he becomes one body with us (Eph. 3:6) making us a temple of the whole God-Head—for in the very body of Christ “the whole fullness of Godhead dwells corporeally” (Col. 3:9). . . .⁸²

Emphasis on unity with Christ is analogous to Gregoras’s description of the mosaic image as “our Savior.” Gregoras repeated that term twice in his text rather than using the epithet *Pantokrator*. He clearly wanted to call attention not to Christ’s power as ruler, but rather to his role as the savior of humankind. That role was a major focus of the liturgy, as explained in the

liturgical commentary by the fourteenth-century writer Nicholas Chamaetos Kabasilas:

Now the Scripture calls Christ “Savior,” because of the three Divine Persons, the Son alone was the worker of our salvation; he did everything by himself, as St. Paul says: “By himself he made purification of our sins.” He himself was an example of the good shepherd, who did not send others out to look for the lost sheep, but went himself for it, and found it, and bore it on his shoulders. That is why he was given the name Jesus, which means Savior.⁸³

On another level, of course, the Byzantine state needed a savior during a time of political troubles and economic devastation. In Hagia Sophia, in particular, Christ in the dome carried this message to the faithful who took part in the eucharist during the divine liturgy and through union with Christ to receive hope for salvation.

The Pendentives: Celestial Beings

STATE OF PRESERVATION, DESCRIPTION, AND STYLE

Each of the pendentives supporting the dome is decorated with a six-winged celestial being, though only the two on the eastern side are medieval (figs. 2, 4, 6, 18–20). They were cleaned and consolidated in 2010 and 2011,

82 *Triads* 1.3.38, p. 193; Meyendorff, *St. Gregory Palamas*, 112.

83 N. Kabasilas, *A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, trans. J. M. Hussey and P. A. McNulty (Crestwood, NY, 1977), 38.



FIG. 19 Hagia Sophia, southeast pendentive, showing a celestial being (photo by author)



FIG. 20 Hagia Sophia, northeast pendentive, detail showing the face of a celestial being (photo courtesy of Philipp Niewöhner)

at which point an oval starlike medallion was removed from the face of the northeast being (figs. 6, 19–20), while an analogous covering was left on the southeast one (fig. 19). These two winged beings must have been part of the fourteenth-century decorative program even though they were not mentioned by Gregoras. The eastern pendentives had partially collapsed in the fourteenth-century earthquake and their decoration had to be made *de novo*. Complementary figures to the west were probably made at the same time and in the same style, but may already have been lost before a visit



FIG. 21 Hagia Sophia, drawing by Guillaume-Joseph Grelot, 1672 (Grelot, *Relation nouvelle d'un voyage de Constantinople* [Paris, 1680])

by Cornelius Loos in 1710.⁸⁴ In 1672, Guillaume-Josef Grelot saw only “deux grands Seraphins au-dessous de la partie Orientale du dôme,” though for the sake of completeness he added more winged beings to his drawing of the interior (fig. 21).⁸⁵ A. N. Muraviev, who visited Hagia Sophia in 1849, noted that two western cherubim were missing and had been painted in by the Fossati brothers during their restoration of mosaics (1847–49), but Gaspare Fossati recorded the medieval pair of celestial beings to the east in drawings and watercolors.⁸⁶ They then masked the faces, hitherto uncov-

84 Mango, *Materials* (n. 1 above), 84; For comments on visits to Hagia Sophia by Cornelius Loos (in 1711), and also other visitors, including Reimers (in 1793), Efimov (in 1835), and Alom (in 1839), see Mango, *Materials*, 83, fig. 4.

85 Ibid., 127.

86 Ibid., 136–37 (appendix 2). The eastern pair of celestial beings were also copied and published by Antoniadi, *Εκφρασις της Αγίας*



FIG. 22 Icon of Archangel Michael, Byzantine Museum, Athens (photo courtesy of Giovanni Dall'Orto)



FIG. 23 Icon of Archangel Michael, detail, Byzantine Museum, Athens (photo courtesy of Giovanni Dall'Orto)

ered, with star medallions in order to comply with the Islamic custom that forbids human representation in religious settings.⁸⁷

In spite of some loss of tesserae and plaster, the eastern pair of six-winged celestial beings is in relatively good condition (figs. 6, 19–20). The two figures are distinct. The northeast one has its upper wings joined above its head, its center wings spread sideways, and its lower wings covering its legs (Is. 6:2). On the southeast figure, the upper wings are raised above the head but apart, as if flying, thus making the whole figure much bolder and visually more dramatic. It was this image that the Fossati brothers used as a model for both of the missing celestial beings in the west. Evidently there was little or no surviving visual evidence of these two missing figures. The well-preserved fourteenth-century mosaics on the eastern pendentives allow us to appreciate the high quality of their execution. Both figures have powerful wings with realistically rendered feathers; they are carefully outlined in dark brown tesserae

with lighter tones in the center. These varying tones of brown are surrounded by bright blue and green feathers to give the figures a dramatic aura and make them both appear to glow. The north celestial being has blue and green between his lower wings, while the south being has multilayered bright blue feathers spreading from the outer edges of the figure.

The face of each winged being is surrounded by short curly feathers that form a diamond-shaped frame. The uncovered one in the northeast pendentive is finely executed (fig. 20). Its physiognomy—strong eyes and eyebrows, and an elongated nose with a rounded tip—is the work of a skilled draftsman. Although the face is very broad, when seen from a distance (as intended) it appears elongated and smooth. The mosaicists clearly took into consideration the optical distortions caused by the curvature of the pendentive.

Stylistically, the face is closely related to icon and manuscript painting of its era. For example, it is strongly reminiscent of the youthful faces in figures on the icon of St. Catherine or St. Irene from Verroia (1320s) and the women of the Bulgarian Tsar's family in the manuscript

Σοφίας (n. 38 above), 3; pls. A and B following p. 76; See discussion of these drawings in Mango, *Materials* (n. 1 above), 85, figs. 111–18.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 84, figs. 111–18.

of Ivan Alexander of Sofia (1355–56).⁸⁸ The skin is carefully modeled in delicate flesh tones, with rich olive accents above and below the eyes and nose, and above the eyebrows. Brownish lines imitating brushstrokes suggest shadows from the framing feathers. This image is in the best tradition of Palaiologan art, as seen in the frescoes of Kariye Camii.⁸⁹ Its closest parallel is the icon of Archangel Michael in the Byzantine Museum in Athens (figs. 22–23), attributed to Constantinople in the third quarter of the fourteenth century.⁹⁰ Not only are the facial type and the modeling of the flesh similarly depicted, but the eyes, mouth, and wings are as well. On both mosaic and icon, the eyes are rendered with a degree of naturalism unusual in Palaiologan painting. Seen at close range, the eyes are voluminous with distinct eyelids and irises. At Hagia Sophia they even center on radiating small black lines (a striking imitation of real human irises), and on the Michael icon the black paint is slightly blurred in a few places, producing a similar effect of an iris. And while mouths bowed on the sides enjoyed wide popularity in the middle and second part of the fourteenth century, these mouths are almost identically executed. Finally, Michael's majestic wings, carefully rendered with the long feathers in brown tones and bright white and the interior feathers in bluish undertones, provide the closest known comparison for the wings of both celestial beings on the pendentives. The Michael icon and the Hagia Sophia mosaics were probably executed at nearly the same time.

The face of the heavenly being conveys physical beauty infused with spirituality. Its gaze can be seen from all points in the naos and the galleries, and not one but four such faces must have originally confronted the worshippers. With their dynamic wings, these carefully depicted creatures seem to move on the surfaces of

the pendentives. The major visual difference between the figures is not in their type, but rather the varying position of their wings, which emphasize their movement during the performance of the hymns.

ICONOGRAPHY

In order to better understand the iconographic choice of celestial beings in the reconstruction of Hagia Sophia's dome program, the following briefly addresses their depiction in Byzantine church decoration and their role in Divine Liturgy, as well as the impact of the latter on the Hagia Sophia images.

Hagia Sophia's celestial beings are often referred to as *seraphim* or *cherubim*.⁹¹ It is, however, difficult to attribute them to both. They are similarly represented with human faces, legs covered with a pair of wings, and two wings spread sideways. Their names are not inscribed. Because seraphim and cherubim were considered as the highest rank of angels, both types of celestial beings appear on pendentives accompanying dome images of the Pantokrator or the Cross, as well as in many other compositions.⁹² Their depiction, however, can occur in a variety of ways.

Seraphim are depicted with six wings, legs, and human faces, based on Isaiah 6:2, and are often labeled *hexapteryga* ("with six wings"). In some cases they have eyes all over their bodies (see Apoc. 4:6–8).⁹³ Cherubim are also represented with six wings, but the wings partially cover their legs. They can have four different heads: angel, eagle, lion, and ox. In some cases, seraphim and cherubim are depicted very similarly and they are not clearly identified, thus creating confusion regarding their identity, as at Hagia Sophia's pendentives.⁹⁴

88 T. Papazotos, *Byzantine Icons of Verroia* (Athens, 1995), 42–43, fig. 23; L. Zhivkova, *Chetveroevangelie na tsar Ivan Aleksandr* (Sofia, 1980), esp. 32–33, fols. 2v, 3r.

89 Underwood, *Kariye Djami* (n. 42 above), 3:412–25, figs. 212–16.

90 K. Weitzmann, M. Chatzidakis, and S. Radojic, *Die Ikonen: Sainai, Griechenland u. Jugoslawien* (Herrsching, 1979), figs. 96–97; K.-P. Kalafati, "Icon with the Archangel Michael," in *Heaven and Earth* (n. 80 above), 139–40; P. Vokotopoulos, *Byzantines eikones* (Athens, 1995), 213, no. 95, fig. 95. Vokotopoulos points out that this icon is close in style to the icon of Christ Pantokrator from the Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, ca. 1363 (Vokotopoulos, *Byzantines eikones*, no. 96); Kalafati, "Icon with the Archangel Michael."

91 Cyril Mango called them *seraphim*, but also correctly noted that they could be both cherubim and seraphim: Mango, *Materials* (n. 1 above), 83, 85–86. See also Antoniadi, *Εκφρασις της Αγίας Σοφίας*, 3:74–78; D. Pallas, "Seraphim," *RBK* 3:77–89.

92 Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite places seraphim at the highest order of angels.

93 O. Wulff, *Cherubim, Throne and Seraphim* (Leipzig, 1894); Mango, *Materials*, figs. 22, 26–27; D. Pallas, "Eine Differenzierung unter den himmlischen Ordnungen," *BZ* 64 (1971): 55–60; idem, "Cherubim," *RBK* 3:56–78; A. Karpozilos and N. P. Ševčenko, "Cherubim," *ODB* 1:419–20; G. Peers, *Subtle Bodies: Representing Angels in Byzantium* (Berkeley, 2001), esp. 112–14, with bibliography n. 55.

94 Karpozilos and Ševčenko, "Cherubim," 1:419–20. On confusion of celestial beings, see also Peers, *Subtle Bodies*, 47–48.

Discrepancies and confusions in the depiction of seraphim and cherubim can be attributed to the influence of the liturgy. The liturgy of John Chrysostom was firmly established and widely disseminated by the eleventh century, and was thereafter uniformly employed throughout Byzantium and its provinces.⁹⁵ Because seraphim and cherubim were considered being closest to God and their function was to praise God, they play an important role in the Divine Liturgy, including Cherubikon and Trisagion hymns and the anaphora prayer.⁹⁶ The Cherubikon hymn was a *troparion* that accompanied the transfer of the gifts during the great Entrance ceremony.⁹⁷ So was another hymn, the *Trisagion*, or “the thrice-holy hymn” praising God, which featured seraphim. During the Divine Liturgy the priest recites the anaphora, and choir as both seraphim and cherubim are chanting praise to God:

Thou art surrounded by thousands of Archangels and tens of thousands of Angels, by the Cherubim and Seraphim that are six-winged, full of eyes and soar aloft on their wings, singing, crying, shouting, and saying the triumphal hymn:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of Thy Glory. . . .⁹⁸

95 In Hagia Sophia and elsewhere, it was normally coupled with the Palestinian neo-Sabaitic rites. R. F. Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short History* (Collegeville, MN, 1992); idem, *Liturgy in Byzantium and Beyond* (Aldershot, 1995); T. Pott, *La réforme liturgique byzantine: Étude de phénomène de l'évolution non-spontanée de la liturgie byzantine* (Rome, 2000); S. Janeras, *Le Vendredi-saint dans la tradition liturgique byzantine: Structure et histoire de ses offices*, *Analecta liturgica* 13, *Studia Anselmiana* 99 (Rome, 1988); G. Berttonière, *The Historical Development of the Easter Virgil and Related Services in the Greek Church*, OCA 193 (Rome, 1972); H.-J. Schulz, *The Byzantine Liturgy: Symbolic Structure and Faith Expression* (New York, 1986); A. Schmemmann, *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (London, 1966); N. P. Ševčenko, “Art and Liturgy in the Later Byzantine Empire,” *Cambridge History of Christianity: Eastern Christianity* (Cambridge, 2008), 127–53.

96 D. Pallas, “Cherubim,” *RBK* 3:56–78; A. Karpozilos and N. P. Ševčenko, “Seraphim,” *ODB* 3:1870; eadem, “Cherubim,” *ODB* 1:419; Peers, *Subtle Bodies*, esp. 44–49 with bibliography n. 57.

97 R. F. Taft, “Cheroubikon,” *ODB* 1:418. See also idem, *The Great Entrance: A History of the Transfer of the Gifts and Other Preanaphoral Rites of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, OCA 200 (Rome, 1975), 53–118.

98 Kabasilas, *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, 12–13.

In a liturgical commentary on the Trisagion hymn, on the other hand, Kabasilas gives another interpretation of the celestial beings:

Next we praise God himself, the Triune God, as the coming of the Savior revealed him to us. The hymn which we sing comes to us from the angels, and is taken in part from the book of sacred psalms of the prophet. It was gathered together by Christ's Church and dedicated to the Trinity. For the *Hagios*, which is repeated thrice, is the angelic acclamation. . . .⁹⁹

Kabasilas does not specify celestial beings, but simply terms their singing “angelic acclamation.”

As in the liturgy, in the visual arts cherubim and seraphim could be grouped together without differentiation, or one type of angel could stand for both. On the fourteenth-century steatite *panagiarion* from Xeropotamou Monastery, the inscription around the central medallion reads, “We, mystically representing the cherubs and singing Holy, Holy, Holy, to the life-giving Trinity, lay aside all earthly cares as we receive the Lord of all, surrounded by the invisible hosts of heaven.”¹⁰⁰ Images of angels are deployed to represent cherubim, what Kabasilas called an “angelic choir.” Thus the choice of celestial beings in Hagia Sophia's pendentives seems to recall the interpretation of seraphim and cherubim by the contemporary theologian Kabasilas, simply as angelic choir. This concept was no doubt apparent to the supervisors of the program, John V and John VI, who in fact was a close friend of Kabasilas.

The Mosaic Program and Its Sources

Early Byzantine programs of church decoration, especially in the Macedonian period, depicted Christ in the dome, and seraphim and cherubim on pendentives. The south gallery in the eastern bay of Hagia Sophia exhibited this composition, now lost, but known

99 Ibid., 59.

100 K. Loverdou-Tsigarida, “Panagiarion,” in *Treasures of Mount Athos*, exhibition catalog, ed. A. A. Karakatsanis (Thessalonike, 1997), 324–25, figs. pp. 317, 324–25; I. Kalavrezou, “The Mother of God in Steatite,” in *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art*, ed. M. Vassilaki (Milan, 2000), 190, fig. 127.

from the Loos and Fossati drawings.¹⁰¹ Around the Pantokrator in the dome were celestial beings on the pendentives, with heads of an eagle, a lion, a man, and an ox. A similar composition adorned the church that Leo VI constructed for his father-in-law, Stylianos Zaoutzes, as we know from a description in Leo's oration.¹⁰² Analogous images had been employed even earlier, particularly in apse compositions in Cappadocia.¹⁰³ During the Macedonian period, cherubim and seraphim served to signify Old Testament messages about Christ, and to visually embody the celestial powers who descend to earth to join with human praise: the liturgy in heaven goes on eternally, while our time on earth has help from above.

As centrally planned churches became more prevalent in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, dome images of Christ also became common in both Constantinople and the provinces, though domes might also present other images such as the Ascension, Pentecost, or the Virgin.¹⁰⁴ Seraphim and cherubim were represented in the *katholikon* of the Nea Mone as well as in the cathedrals of Monreale, Cefalù, and San Marco, which were commissioned by Western patrons. In the majority of twelfth-century and later Palaiologan churches, however, they were not displayed on the pendentives, which were generally occupied by the four Evangelists. The heavenly liturgy was depicted on dome walls, as in Cypriot churches, twelfth-century examples at Lagoudera and Trikomo, the thirteenth-century structure at Lysi, and many others.¹⁰⁵ Similar compositions are found in Mistra, in the church of Christ Zoodotes (currently Hagia Sophia) and the Peribleptos Monastery.¹⁰⁶ The Peribleptos is indeed one of the most

interesting examples because the heavenly liturgy is depicted below the Pantokrator in the dome medallion and it clearly includes both seraphim and cherubim. This register of the dome is divided into eight segments and is occupied by pairs of apostles and the Virgin with angels. Between those figures and the dome medallion above are eight figures: four seraphim and four cherubim, one in each segment. The cherubim are composed of nimbed heads and legs partially covered by their wings, whereas the seraphim have only faces, where their six wings meet. In all of the churches named above, as at the Peribleptos in Mistra, the heavenly liturgy is a symbolic projection and a counterpart of the earthly liturgy performed in the space below.

The structure of the sixth-century dome in Hagia Sophia did not allow the use of such a standard composition. Its dome walls are broken up by forty ribs, so there is no space for an extended depiction of the heavenly liturgy. Instead, in a unique solution perhaps already present before the fourteenth-century mosaics were created, four celestial beings were displayed on the pendentives. Contrary to some earlier Byzantine examples when cherubim and seraphim were depicted as distinct iconographic types with their names inscribed, the artisans of Hagia Sophia chose a neutral iconographic type of celestial beings without specific attributes. This also allowed them to form an angelic choir, as Kabasilas called them. They were thereby included in the Palaiologan mosaic program of the dome to visually evoke liturgical performance of the cherubikon hymn in which they gave praise to God. Together, with the image of Christ Pantokrator in the dome medallion, they manifested the celebration of the Eucharist, which occurs in the naos below the dome.

Conclusion

The different elements of this last Palaiologan restoration campaign at Hagia Sophia vary in quality and aesthetic. The dome wall mosaics are poorly made, with cheap and reused tesserae that were carelessly set. Those on the dome medallion and pendentives, on the

101 Mango, *Materials* (n. 1 above), 29–35, figs. 22–24.

102 Mango, *Art* (n. 56 above), 203–4.

103 C. Jolivet-Lévy, *La Cappadoce Médiévale: images et spiritualité* (Paris, 2002), 92–125.

104 R. Ousterhout, *Master Builders in Byzantium* (Princeton, 1999), 244–45.

105 A. W. Carr and L. J. Morrocco, *A Byzantine Masterpiece Recovered, the Thirteenth-Century Murals of Lysi, Cyprus* (Austin, 1991), esp. 52–55 and fig. 16, pl. 6.

106 S. Dufrenne, *Les Programmes iconographiques des églises byzantines de Mistra* (Paris, 1970), 13–16; M. Chatzidakis, *Mistras: The Medieval City and the Castle* (Athens, 1992), 69–71; S. Kalopissi-Verti, "Patronage and Artistic Production in Byzantium During the Palaiologan Period," in *Faith and Power*, ed. Brooks (n. 47 above), 76–97, esp. 81; Dufrenne, *Programmes iconographiques*, 14–16;

D. Mouriki-Charalambous, "βιβλικαὶ προεικονίσεις της Παναγίας εἰς τον τροῦλλον της Περιβλέπτου του Μυστρά," *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Έτ.* 25 (1970): 217–51; Chatzidakis, *Mistras*, 73–90, fig. 47; A. Louvi-Kizis, "Ο κτήτορες της Περιβλέπτου του Μυστρά," *Δελτ. Χριστ. Αρχ. Έτ.* 24 (2003): 101–18; Kalopissi-Verti, "Patronage and Artistic Production," 81.


other hand, exhibit the best of Palaiologan craftsmanship. They are highly spiritual images painstakingly executed. The single visible face, that of the northeast celestial being, is very detailed and powerfully rendered, simulating the dynamic brush strokes of such contemporary painted icons as the Archangel Michael at the Byzantine Museum in Athens. Mosaics on the eastern arch, although considerably damaged, are also well executed. These contrasts in quality suggest that with the poor state and scarce funds, the program's supervisors employed the best artisans and the most expensive materials for the primary images (i.e., the celestial beings and the lost Christ of the dome) and they economized on the production of the secondary areas (i.e., the dome wall and windows). In the end, though, the fourteenth-century restorations blended well with the sixth- and tenth-century sections of the dome, and the poor workmanship of some parts was not easily visible from the church floor.

The surviving celestial beings on the huge pendentives project their unique majestic aura to the sacred space below, as the lost Christ in the eleven-meter dome medallion presumably once did. Nikephoros Gregoras applied epithets to the dome imagery that reflect the hesychast conception of Christ, such as those articulated by Gregory Palamas and the circle of monastic intellectuals close to John VI Kantakouzenos and John V Palaiologos. The latter emperor chose to quote the imagery of Christ in the dome for the obverse of a silver stavraton with his portrait on the reverse. By circulating the bust of Christ, coupled with his own image similarly depicted on the most public of media, the emperor intended to reinforce his own power, which was considerably diminished by that time because of his shrinking

territory, the lack of finances, and political instability. Although the program of the mid-fourteenth-century mosaics may derive from earlier imagery in Hagia Sophia, its political context and profound spirituality manifest the last Palaiologan trends in artistic style, iconography, and theology.

The restoration of the structural damage and the creation of new mosaics in Hagia Sophia took many years to complete. The abovementioned sources gave credit for the repair of structural damages to Anna of Savoy (for the eastern arch and semidome) and John VI (for the fabric of the dome and pendentives). During the supervision of John VI, a small portion of the mosaics were completed, probably the upper section of the dome segment. This project experienced delays because of the civil war, for which John VI misused public funds intended for the restoration of Hagia Sophia, financing instead his military exploits. After the change of regime, the remainder of the mosaic decoration—including an image of Christ in the dome and the lower portion of the dome wall, pendentives, and the mosaics of the eastern arch—was completed. For this, John V should get credit. After all, John V's own portrait was installed on the arch, manifesting his victory and legitimacy for the throne. But the final credit should go to the citizens of the Byzantine capital whose contributions were critical for the repair of the fabric and redecoration of mosaics of Hagia Sophia during a period of financial and political hardship in the Byzantine Empire.

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